

Human remains from Deh Dumen, Iran, 2019

Arkadiusz Sottysiak¹, Reza Naseri^{*2}, Mahsa Najafi³

¹ Department of Bioarchaeology,
Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw,
Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28, 00-927 Warsaw, Poland

² Department of Archaeology, University of Zabol,
Bonjar Avenue, Zabol, Iran

email: r.nasery@gmail.com (corresponding author)

³ Institute of Archaeology, University of Tehran,
13 Poorsina St., Qods St., Enghelab St., 14176-53911 Tehran, Iran

The cemetery of Deh Dumen is located one kilometer away from the village of Deh-Paen, Pataveh district, Dena county, Kohgiluyeh va Boyer-Ahmad province (34°46' 84"N, 51°02'99"E) (Figure 1). This site was discovered during a rescue survey preceding construction of the Khersan Dam 3, conducted in October and November 2008. In total, 29 archaeological sites were discovered, among them the cemetery of Deh Dumen which was selected for regular excavations (Ghasemi & Watson 2014). The first season was conducted by Reza Naseri in March 2013; in total 15 graves including five jar burials were found (Naseri 2013, Oudbashi et al. 2016). During the



Figure 1. Aerial view of Deh Dumen beside a village and the Khersan river.
Map data: Google, CNES / Airbus.

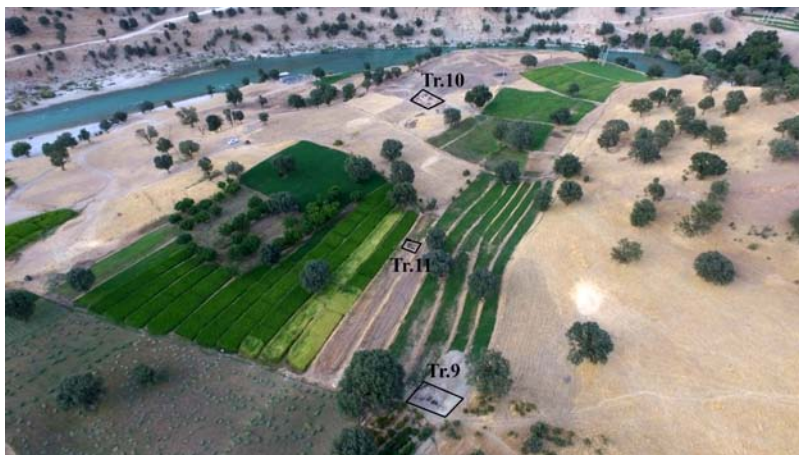


Figure 2. Location of the trenches excavated during the third season at Deh Dumen. Photograph by Reza Naseri.

second season, in September and October 2016, 11 graves were excavated (Naseri 2013, Sołtysiak & Naseri 2017, Naseri et al. 2019). A third season was conducted in August and September 2019, during which 10 graves and five jar burials were unearthed (Naseri 2019). The portions of the cemetery assessed to date cover only a small fraction of the total area, which originally extended for a c. 1000×500m and was used for several centuries.

The graves excavated during the first two seasons were dated to the second half of the third millennium BC and to the first half of the second millennium BC (i.e. Early and Middle Bronze Age). During the 2019 season, all graves in Trench 10 were dated to the 2nd half of the 3rd millennium, while Trenches 9 and 11 were dated to the 2nd millennium BCE.

The third season of excavations was conducted to find the extent of the cemetery and therefore three trenches were opened in different parts of the area (**Figure 2**). Trench 9 (7×10m) in the middle part of the cemetery, close to Trenches 7 and 8 excavated in the second season, included two graves (27 and 28). Trench 10 (15×10 m) was opened 210m NE of Trench 9, near the Kherasan river (**Figure 3**), and contained 7 graves and 5 jar burials (graves 30–36). Trench 11 (5×4m) was opened between Trenches 9 and 10 and contained only one grave (29) (**Figure 2**).

Two grave types were noted at the cemetery. The first group are box shaped graves, having flat roofs covered by slabs and stone walls along two or three sides of the grave. The western walls of these graves were closed by slabs. The second group are ridged graves with zigzag triangular roofs that were shallower in comparison to the first group. The northern and southern walls of these graves were made by stones in rows and the



Figure 3. General view of Trench 10. Photograph by Ali Naseri.



Figure 4. Evidence of water staining at the cranium from Grave 34. Scale bar 1cm.
Photograph by Arkadiusz Sołtysiak.

western walls were closed by slabs. In both groups pebbles were used for filling the empty spaces between the roof slabs. Entrances to all graves are on the western side

(Figure 3), except Grave 35 where the entrance is on the eastern side. The bodies in all undisturbed contexts were placed in a flexed position. In all graves but one, Grave 30, only one individual was buried. Grave 29 contained no human remains, just animal bones and teeth. In all graves, tiny pieces of animal bones were found, except Graves 27, 31 and 32. In Grave 33 many animal horns were present. Jar burials 2 and 4 included human remains, jar burial 1 contained animal bones and jars 3 and 5 lacked any bone fragments.

Variable artifacts were found in all graves and most of them were located near the skull or near the feet of an individual. There were pottery vessels, stone vessels, bronze objects like trays, bowls, chalices, pins, battle-axes and mace-heads, as well as earrings made of silver alloy and semi-gem stones (Naseri 2019).

The human remains from Deh Dumen were studied in September 2019 in the facilities of the Institute of Archaeology, Tehran University, using the standard protocols presented in Buikstra & Ubelaker (1994) with some modifications (see Sołtysiak et al. 2019). In total, the remains of 13 individuals have been identified (Table 1), though most skeletons were incomplete, eroded and covered by thick layers of crystalline deposits. This condition prevented observation of pathological lesions and only occasionally dental caries and enamel hypoplasia could be scored in a reliable way. On one skeleton, G34, clear evidence of water staining was present (Figure 4) and most skeletal elements of other skeleton, G33, had black fungus staining, indicating high humidity in at least some graves, perhaps of a seasonal character.

The graves with stone construction contained only adult skeletons and it seems that both sexes were buried in this part of the cemetery, although sex assessment was possible in only a few cases. On the other hand, jar burials contained subadult

Table 1. Basic characteristics of human remains from Deh Dumen, season 2019.

| Grave | Sex | Age-at-death | Caries | Comments |
|---------|-----|--------------|---------|---|
| G27 | F?? | adult | 0/9 | very incomplete and fragmented skeleton |
| G28 | ? | adult | 1/4 | a few elements from one skeleton |
| G30 | ? | adult | | MNI based on tibiae and temporal bones |
| G30 | ? | adult | | |
| G31 | M | mature | | almost complete skeleton |
| G32 | M | adult | | almost complete skeleton |
| G33 | ? | adult | | a few elements from one skeleton |
| G34 | F?? | adult | 0/2 | incomplete skeleton |
| G35 | ? | adult | | a few elements from one skeleton |
| G36 | F?? | adult | | a few elements from one skeleton |
| T10/C20 | – | 6 years | 0/4 (d) | a few elements from one skeleton |
| T10/C26 | – | neonate | | incomplete skeleton |
| T11/C4 | ? | adolescent | 0/1 | a single tooth (LP ₂) |

skeletons, although they were much fewer in number and therefore the frequency of age-at-death categories is strongly biased in the overall sample.

Acknowledgments: The study of human remains from Deh Dumen was financially supported by the Polish National Science Centre (Narodowe Centrum Nauki, grant No. 2016/22/M/HS3/00353). Special thanks to Daryosh Tavakoli Mehr, Ali Naseri, Leila Keikha, Zeinab Mahjoob, Zeinab Hadi Dastjerdi, Fateh Zarefar and Ali Tavakoli Zaniani for their assistance in excavating the site and preparing the final report. A part of the archaeological research was conducted using the UOZGR-9618-100 grant from the University of Zabol.

References

- Buikstra J.A., Ubelaker D.H. (eds.) (1994), *Standards for data collection from human skeletal remains*, Fayetteville: Arkansas Archaeological Survey.
- Ghasemi P., Watson G. (2014), *The Khersan 3 archaeological survey: New insights into settlement patterns in the Zagros folding zone from hydro-dam project archaeology*, *Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 51:167-211.
- Naseri R. (2013), *Preliminary report of the first season of salvage excavation at Deh Dumen*, Tehran: Iranian Center for Archaeological Research. [in Persian]
- Naseri R. (2016), *Preliminary report of the second season of salvage excavation at Deh Dumen*, Tehran: Iranian Center for Archaeological Research. [in Persian]
- Naseri R. (2019), *Preliminary report of the third season of salvage excavation at Deh Dumen*, Tehran: Iranian Center for Archaeological Research. [in Persian]
- Naseri R., Miskiewicz J.J., Stewart T.J., Sołtysiak A. (2019), *Preliminary insights into human femoral bone remodelling at Late Bronze Age multiple burials from Iran*, *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 168(S68):173.
- Oudbashi O., Naseri R., Malekzadeh M. (2016), *Technical studies on the Bronze Age metal artefacts from the graveyard of Deh Dumen, south-western Iran (third millennium BC)*, *Archaeometry* 58(6):947-965.
- Sołtysiak A., Fazeli Nashli H., Safari M., Moradi G. (2019), *Human remains from Shahne Poshte, Iran, 2019*, *Bioarchaeology of the Near East* 13:85-96.
- Sołtysiak A., Naseri R. (2017), *Human remains from Deh Dumen, Iran, 2013-2016*, *Bioarchaeology of the Near East* 11:70-75.